

## The 'Foreign' Lobby

SEN. FULBRIGHT, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, is disturbed about "foreign" lobbies in the United States, mainly in Washington.

Provoked mainly by the sugar lobby, just before Congress passed a new sugar-control law, the Senator has obtained a \$50,000 appropriation from the Senate for an investigation.

The investigation has two points of usefulness:

- To determine whether the Foreign Agents Registration Act, on the books since 1938, is working, and if not what to do about it; and
- To let the public know what is going on.

Meanwhile, the staff of the Foreign Relations Committee has turned in a preliminary report, indicating the probable course of the investigation and suggesting the law has not been effective.

Main purpose of the law, anyway, is to keep the public informed. If it isn't doing that, it isn't much use. The law says, in effect, we don't care so much what you do, but register and tell us about it.

As Sen. Fulbright notes in a foreword to the staff report, the size and activity of the "foreign" lobby has "increased in direct proportion to our Government's growing political, military and economic commitments abroad." Naturally. The same can be said of our home-grown lobbies.

The more sugar on the table the more flies buzzing around it.

Foreign lobbies are not necessarily any more sinister than the domestic lobbies which swarm Washington to influence law-making or to get bigger cuts of Government handouts. But not all of them are open and above board, as the recent sugar experience demonstrated. The more booty the more bootleggers.

The test, in the end, is not so much with the lobbies but with Congress, which passes the laws and appropriates the money. If Congress does its job, lobbies may be seen and heard, but they will gain nothing not already dictated by the public interest of the United States. Any investigation of lobbies must also involve Congress itself. Whatever the Fulbright inquiry may reveal not only could lead to better law, but to a higher level of congressional prudence.